I. Department Goals for Student Learning

The Department of Political Science offers two undergraduate degrees: a B.A. in Political Science and a B.S.P.A. in Public Administration. The Department also offers an Masters in Public Administration degree at the graduate level which has its own assessment plan separate from the undergraduate plan.

Regarding teaching, the Departmental Mission Statement states:

The Department of Political Science and Public Administration serves the global, national, state and local community by providing teaching, research, and service. In its teaching mission, the Department is committed to the liberal arts mission of the University and it strives to develop students’ communication skills and critical and independent thinking. It also provides professional education to prepare students to assume leadership positions in the public, nonprofit, and private spheres because of their understanding of the roles and responsibilities of public service.

Based on our mission statement, we derive the following goals for both programs, whether have a liberal arts orientation like the political science program, or professionally oriented, such as the public administration program.

1. Students will have the ability to think critically and relate theoretical information to practical experiences;
2. Students will have high levels of written communications skills;
3. Students will develop the ability and confidence to communicate orally effectively;
4. Students will develop an understanding of the discipline in which they are being educated.

Achievement of these goals prepares our students for further education and their eventual career paths. We expect that students who attain these goals will be capable of using the knowledge gained effectively and positively and be able to adapt to the changing global environment in which we live.

II. University Goals for Student Learning and Departmental Contributions

The University Mission Statement states that:
The University encourages students to make informed choices, to communicate effectively, to be intellectually curious and creative, to commit themselves to lifelong learning and the service of others, and to share responsibility both for their own communities and for the world. The University promotes cultural diversity among its students, staff and faculty.

The Department of Political Science and Public Administration is committed to positively contributing to the UND mission. We recognize that the university mission includes references to goals and outcomes that are difficult to measure in the short-run. However, we maintain that our Departmental Goals for Student Learning are compatible with those of the university and that achievement of our goals advances university efforts.

If we are successful in achieving our first goal, to develop critical thinking, we expect our students to be able to make informed choices. Our second and third goals are to develop effective written and oral communications skills, both of which are consistent with the university mission statement’s assertion that UND students will “communicate effectively.”. We believe that the development of critical thinking abilities foster intellectual curiosity and creativity. The attainment of critical thinking skills also extends the likelihood that students will be able to deal effectively with the many dimensions of diversity, including diversity associated with an increasingly globalized environment. Furthermore, students who achieve our departmental goals will be adept at adapting to change and will more likely carry a disposition favorable to becoming life-long learners. Given the nature of our subject matter, students who pursue careers that incorporate public service are committing themselves to serve others, so if we meet our goals of effectively teaching our disciplines of political science and public administration, and preparing students for further study and careers, students will be more likely to share responsibility for their communities and the world.

III. Means by Which Goals Will Be Assessed

The Political Science and Public Administration Department uses several venues and methods for assessment of student learning goals. We restate each goal below and an explanation of how each is assessed through direct and indirect measures. Note that since AY 2009-2010, students in the two undergraduate programs, Political Science (B.A.) and Public Administration (B.S.P.A.) are assessed in an identical fashion. This change in our assessment procedures constitutes a “closing the loop” process owing to dissatisfaction in evaluating both programs independently.

Goal 1: To develop the ability to think critically and relate theoretical information to practical experiences

- **Direct measure** of critical thinking assessed through instructor application of a rubric for critical thinking to student papers for the “simulated academic conference” exercise/module of the course in the required Pols 495: Senior Colloquium (capstone) course.
- **Indirect measure** of critical thinking in the capstone course through student reflections through an open-ended survey of students. The questions asked are:
  - Do you feel that the department helped you to improve your critical thinking abilities?
• What, if anything, should be done to improve the department’s efforts in this area?

- Indirect measure of critical thinking in the capstone course through a student “course mapping” exercise where students rate each core course in the undergraduate curriculum on a scale from one to five where “five” means that the course completely enhanced this skill.

Goal 2: Students will have high levels of written communications skills

- Direct measure of written communication skills assessed in the required Pols 495: Senior Colloquium (capstone) course through instructor application of a rubric for written communication to student papers for the “simulated academic conference” exercise/module of the course.
- Indirect measure of written communication in the capstone course through student reflections through an open-ended survey of students. The questions asked are:
  - Do you think that the department does an adequate job in helping students develop oral and written communication skills?
  - If not, how could it improve?
- Indirect measure of written communication skills in the capstone course through a student “course mapping” exercise where students rate each core course in the undergraduate curriculum on a scale from one to five where “five” means that the course completely enhanced this skill.

Goal 3: Students will develop the ability and confidence to communicate orally effectively

- Direct measure of oral communication skills assessed in the required Pols 495: Senior Colloquium (capstone) course through instructor application of a rubric for oral communication to student presentations for the “simulated academic conference” exercise/module of the course.
- Indirect measure of oral communication in the capstone course through student reflections through an open-ended survey of students. The questions asked are:
  - Do you think that the department does an adequate job in helping students develop oral and written communication skills?
  - If not, how could it improve?
- Indirect measure of oral communication skills in the capstone course through a student “course mapping” exercise where students rate each core course in the undergraduate curriculum on a scale from one to five where “five” means that the course completely enhanced this skill.

Goal 4: Students will develop an understanding of the discipline in which they are being educated

- Students are directly assessed for content each semester in Pols 115: American Government on five criteria: Foundations of American Government; The Constitution;
Politics and the Media; Public Opinion, Political Participation and Voting; and Civil Liberties.
- Instructors randomly pre-select questions from their final exams (multiple choice questions).
- Results are aggregated and reviewed each semester with an eye toward maintaining a 70 percent benchmark of achievement in each content area.
- Indirect measure of “understanding the discipline” through a student “course mapping” exercise where Pols 495 (capstone) students rate each core course in the undergraduate curriculum on a scale from one to five where “five” means that the course completely enhanced this skill.

IV. How Results Will Be Used

At the beginning of each academic year, the PSPA faculty members meet to discuss the results from the various direct and indirect assessments that took place in the capstone course. During these discussions, student learning outcomes are critically evaluated, as well as the process through which assessment takes place. In addition, we take into account a broad range of additional data that might be collected during a particular year that speaks to our goals for students. For example, it has been a common practice for instructors of the capstone to implement a “Learning through Teaching” assignment for students who deliver a lecture to Pols 115 students as part of the course requirements. Their presentations are scored on the same rubric as their academic paper presentations and compared. Also faculty who deliver courses that are included as part of the Essential Studies offerings have separate assessment activities taking place for those courses, and this information is shared during the discussion. These discussions are directed toward closing the loop with the aim of improving the skills and knowledge of the students we serve.